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The Mountain Bard: James Hogg and Macpherson's Ossian

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I would like to start by quoting Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757):

Uncultivated people are but ordinary observers of things, and not critical in distinguishing them; but, for that reason, they admire more, and are more affected with what they see, and therefore express themselves in a warmer and more passionate manner.¹

Hogg used 'uncultivated' and 'passionate' Ossianic material in a number of ways, especially in poetry. Ossianic material served Hogg as a source of literary motifs and bardic characters. It also offered a model for Hogg's self-representation in one aspect of his persona as the Ettrick Shepherd: the Mountain Bard. Moreover, critical responses to the Ettrick Shepherd were partly shaped by the critical climate surrounding Macpherson's mountain bard Ossian.

Hogg, who possessed copies of *Fingal* (1761/62), and *Temora, an ancient epic poem* (1763), was perhaps attracted by certain aspects of Macpherson's Ossian. The retrospective *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760), for instance, situates the seventh-century bard Ossian as an inspired bard within nature, almost as a natural feature:

By the side of a rock on the hill, beneath the aged trees, old Ossian sat on the moss, the last of the race of Fingal. Sightless are his aged eyes; his beard is waving in the wind. Dull through the leafless trees he heard the voice of the north. Sorrow revived in his soul: he began and lamented the dead. (p.18)

This melancholic figure is developed in Scotland's supposedly rediscovered epic *Fingal* into the leading member of a bardic community where, 'Many a voice and many a harp in tuneful sounds arose' (*Fingal* III, p.79). *Temora* stresses that the matter of Ossian was the reliable memories of the ethnically pure: 'If tradition could be depended upon, it is only among a people [...] free of intermixture with foreigners. [...] Such are the inhabitants of the mountains of Scotland' (pp.205-06). Like Scott, in *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-03), Hogg would apply a parallel notion to his traditional mountain community of Ettrick in, for instance, the 'Shepherd's Calendar' series.²

For Macpherson, as for his mentor Blair, the Celts formed an ideal society where bards were agents of cultural integration. The figure of Ossian, in this respect, was an attractive legitimising prototype for an autodidactic poet like Hogg. Hugh Blair, in *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, The Son of Fingal* (1763), found Ossian to be the equivalent of the learned Homeric *rhapsode*, head of a self-regulating 'college' of Bards who anticipated the eighteenth-century men of feeling, 'endowed by nature with an exquisite sensibility of heart' which elevates the status of the rustic poet. As the work of an inhabitant of a 'northern mountainous region' Ossian's was the product of 'nature, not of art'.³ Some scholars, of course, notably David Hume, suspected Macpherson of invention and unscholarly behaviour. Ossian was parodied in the anonymous *Gisbal, An Hyperborean Tale* of 1762 (providing, perhaps, a precedent for Hogg's more satirical treatments of Ossian).

Hogg enjoyed what could be termed a tempered, if enduring, enthusiasm for Northern Scotland. It may be that his Northern tours of the early 1800s alerted Hogg to the creative possibilities of adding Celtic connotations to his peasant poet persona. Perhaps the publication of Henry Mackenzie's *The Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, appointed to Inquire into the Nature and Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian* (1805) encouraged Hogg to consider Ossianic types and styles. In the *Jacobite Relics* (1819-21) he poses as a latter-day Ossian, collecting fragments of a lost Highland culture and celebrating the 'unmarked effusions of a bold and primitive race'. There is, in any case, a shift in orientation from the Ramsayan title of *Scottish Pastorals* (1801), suggesting the writer was a nationally representative rustic, to the Ossianic, heaven-taught implications of *The Mountain Bard* (1807) and *The Forest Minstrel* (1810). As the self-styled 'Mountain Bard' Hogg implies that he is the creative descendant of Ossian:

Fain would I hear our mountains ring
With blasts which former minstrels blew;
Drive slumber hence on viewless wing,
And tales of other times renew.

Suggesting a wilder persona than the tamed, Ramsayan shepherd of *Scottish Pastorals*, Hogg includes many bleak, melancholic items in *The Mountain Bard*, echoing the mood (if not the form) of Ossian, especially in his ballad imitations like 'Sir David Graeme' (based on the 'Twa Corbies'), featuring a widow's 'dull an' a dreamless lethargy' similar to the dreary state of the bereaved people in the Ossianic cycle. 'Farewell to Ettrick', too, exemplifies the mournful tone of Macpherson's Ossian (as well as

recalling Burns's poetic farewell to Scotland).⁴

Critics accepted Hogg's hints that 'the Mountain Bard' was a modern, Southern Ossian. As 'S' commented, in the *Scots Magazine* of 1807, 'in the tender and pathetic [...] he is, in our opinion, more likely to excel than in the light and humorous'. Hogg appeared as an archetypal autodidactic Bard who had overcome tremendous odds to write; the very blemishes in his work were evidence of his untutored, universal appeal:

a poet of nature's own creation, and worthy to rank amongst the most distinguished of all the Caledonian Bards [...] a faulty rhyme, or a grammatical error may occur but [...]. We are here gratified by another proof of persevering genius surmounting the most formidable obstacles.

The *Monthly Review*, condescendingly, noticed a distinct improvement in Hogg's English in *The Mountain Bard*: 'his diction is visibly more correct, and less at variance with the rules of good taste [...] he does not seek a refuge, as it were, in the obscurities of his native dialect'. While the observation is, perhaps, misguided, the critic has discerned Hogg's intention, at this stage of his career, to make his writing more polite, just as Macpherson tidied up his Gaelic idioms so that there was only a hint of the exotic Northern language amidst mainly formal, English idioms.⁵

The title of *The Forest Minstrel* helped sustain the notion of Hogg as an Ossianic figure located, specifically, in Ettrick. As a bard (to use one of Burns's favourite phrases) of Nature's Making, Hogg advocated a return to 'the national melody and exhilarating strains of our own national music'. The Ossianic vein is particularly noticeable in the group of 'Pathetic Songs' like the tragic 'The Soldier's Widow', set to 'Gilderoy' with its theme of loss, echoing Ossian: 'An' art thou fled, my bonny boy, / An' left me here alane', the father fallen 'with gallant Moore, in Spain'. However, as the leading light of a group of (largely autodidactic) poets, the 'Forest Minstrel' has specifically Borders overtones, backed up by melancholic mountain settings and themes, as in 'The Moon was a-waining'. Hogg presents himself as a Mountain Bard, then, primarily of the Borders. The theme was sustained in his later writing. In his *Memoir*, regarding *The Forest Minstrel* Hogg notes that, at the age of thirty-eight, 'I had never been once in any polished society—had read next to nothing [...] and knew no more of human life or manners than a child. I was a sort of natural songster, without another advantage on earth'.⁶

Hogg was, increasingly, seen as a Southern equivalent to Ossian. The *Scots Magazine* commented, in response to *The Forest Minstrel*, in a critique which is at once perceptive and condescending, recasting the language of Macpherson's Ossianic climate:

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The hills and sheep-walks of the south have given birth to a race of untutored bards, whose works display very considerable beauties, mixed with faults, to which all human compositions, and particularly those of untaught genius are liable [...]. The principal fault in Mr Hogg's poetry, is a want of harmony between the different parts of it. His original situation has given him a rude, simple, and somewhat hard style; subsequent circumstances have inspired him with a taste for rich and artificial ornament; and he has, lastly, we know not how, acquired an extreme fondness for a certain species of moral and abstract language.

While admiring Hogg's ability to express 'tragic and impassioned sentiments', the reviewer would not allow that he could cope with styles such as the humorous, which required 'polish and refinement which unlettered bards can scarcely have had an opportunity of acquiring'. The reviewer is right to draw attention to the detrimental effects, at times, of Hogg's 'circumstances'. However the analysis is patronising in its failure to appreciate the strengths of Hogg's combination of 'hard' and 'humorous' styles, preferring Ossianic 'beauties' to the incisive and thoughtful.⁷ The tale-telling sessions of *The Queen's Wake* (1813), with its *Decameron* framing, allow Hogg to use a wide range of Ossianic bardic conventions. Indigenous matter is privileged from the start with Rizzio's contribution in Night One, 'Malcolm of Lorn' (the only item set outside Scotland) being dismissed as 'vapid, artful, terse'. The opening of *The Queen's Wake* invokes the harp, a major Ossianic concern. To compare Hogg's narratorial persona with Macpherson's reimagined Ossian, a passage from Book Fifth of *Temora* can be usefully compared to the opening of *The Queen's Wake*. Macpherson's Ossian addresses the harp of Cona as a living being, within his hall and within nature:

Thou dweller between the shields that hang on high in Ossian's hall, descend from thy place, O harp, and let me hear thy voice.—Son of Alpin, strike the string; thou must awake the soul of the bard. The murmur of Lora's stream has rolled the tale away.—I stand in the cloud of years: few are its openings towards the past, and when the vision comes it is but dim and dark.—I hear thee, harp of Cona; my soul returns, like a breeze, which the sun brings back to the vale, where dwelt the lazy mist. (p.263)

The opening of *The Queen's Wake* pays conscious tribute to this passage, through both its language and its imagery. Hogg makes convincing use of an Ossianic frame of reference:

Now burst, ye Winter clouds that lower,
Fling from your folds the piercing shower;
Sing to the tower and leafless tree,
Ye cold winds of adversity;
Your blights, your chilling influence shed,

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On wareless heart, and houseless head;
Your ruth or fury I disdain,
I've found my Mountain Lyre again. (p.3)

Hogg's mountain lyre, 'companion of a happier day', the 'Harp of the mountain and the wood' could be the twin instrument to the 'harp of Cona'. It sustains Hogg's Caledonian bard as he sings, 'Of minstrel honours now no more;/ Of bards who sung in days of yore'.⁸

Hogg presents a variety of Ossianic, mountain bards in *The Queen's Wake*. Gardyn, spectacularly, is a stronger variation on Macpherson's elderly warrior bard. According to Gaelic tradition—*The Book of the Dean of Lismore* for instance—Ossian was an elderly broken man, mourning the great days of the warrior Fianna, Scotland's lost guardians. Like the classical blind bards Thamyris and Tiresias, he had prophetic powers. Macpherson's Ossian is a broken man with tears running down his face, proclaiming his sorrow, 'memory wounds the aged'; 'the woes of the aged are many; their tears are for the past' (*Fragments*, VI, pp.14, 15). This is the faltering man for whom Scott creates a Borders equivalent in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805). However, Hogg's bard can 'strike the harp' (the formulaic command of *Carric Thura*) with vigour. With his 'proud heart' and 'native dignity', Gardyn exemplifies the independent, Northern bard, in his prime even at sixty:

Full sixty years the bard had seen,
Yet still his manly form and mien,
His garb of ancient Caledon,
Where lines of silk and scarlet shone,
And golden garters 'neath his knee,
Announced no man of mean degree.

Upon his harp, of wondrous frame,
Was carved his lineage and his name.
There stood the cross that name above,
Fair emblem of Almighty love;
Beneath rose an embossment proud,—
A rose beneath a thistle bowed.

Lightly upon the form he sprung,
And his bold harp impetuous rung. (p.48)

Gardyn, a wild and vigorous Christian with his mountain song, uses the language of Macpherson's Ossian with an archaic flavour (and a touch of parody). His Highland anti-hero, the murderous 'Young Kennedy', the 'nursling of misery' is compared in stature, in an Ossianic-style metaphor, to 'the pine of the hill'. Kennedy kills the father of the woman he desires, Matilda, 'the flower of the Teith'; the father, as a revenant, alerts

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her to this on her wedding night. Applauded for his two-part narration (text and the bride's tale) the narrator bewails the loss of the 'name' of the bard 'whose thrilling song/ Has poured from age to age along'. However, he suggests, the modern bardic Harp of Scotland, with its 'rude array, and air sublime' has now passed to 'Yarrow's banks and braes of Tweed' where, 'Though long on time's dark whirlpool tossed,/ The song is saved, the bard is lost'. The narrator comments on his youthful, sensual experiences:

Yes, I have weened, with fondest sigh,
The spirit of the bard was nigh [...]
That spirit, too, might breathe on mine;
Well pleased to see her songs the joy
Of that poor lonely shepherd boy. (pp.63-64)

The Queen's Wake narrator, then, implies that the 'lonely shepherd boy' Hogg has inherited the Northern bardic harp in person.

Hogg includes more subtle, and ironic, reflections on his own status as a latter-day Southern Bard, in *The Queen's Wake*, partly through his juxtapositions. 'Young Kennedy' is followed by the offering of the fifth bard, 'Of peasant make and doubtful mien' with a 'harp strung ill', whose 'awkward' manner arouses scorn. The 'learned' *rhapsode*-style bard, in this respect, is in contrast with the proto-autodidact. Other Ossianic figures include the narrator of 'Glen-Avin' (pp.104-13) which, like 'Young Kennedy', is set in the Highland landscape (here reminiscent of *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) as much as reflecting 'every form that Ossian knew'). Its narrator, Young Farquhar from the hills of Spey, recounts a mystical encounter between a hoary sage and the Spirit of the Storm (an image used by Hogg in his prose 'Shepherd's Calendar', as well as by Leyden in poetry). The wizard who challenges the Spirit is left as a bodyless soul. The Storm Spirit, in this respect, could be interpreted as the wild peasant Hogg, the seer, ironically reminiscent of Scott as Bard, or Wizard of the North, representing the sceptical *literati*. The Spirit is, ultimately, victorious, his 'passing shrieks' surviving for posterity. This is, appropriately, followed by 'Old David' (pp.118-38) continuing the supernatural elements and presenting Hogg himself in the introduction as the bard nursed 'in Nature's bosom' in Etrick. The experience of this bard demonstrates the problems faced by peasant poets, from his unprepossessing entry (even his name 'excited merriment') onwards:

The ladies smiled, the courtiers sneered;
For such a simple air and mien
Before a court had never been.
A clown he was, bred in the wild,

And late from native moors exiled,
 In hopes his mellow mountain strain
 High favour from the great would gain.
 Poor wight! he never weened how hard
 For poverty to earn regard! (pp.114-15)

The bard, like Hogg, is a peasant poet, whose low social status means he is considered, immediately, as second-rate. Neither his 'soothing' notes nor the 'zealous word of bard renowned' can convince the audience, 'that worth could be/ Inherent in such mean degree'. However, when the Queen smiles at the Bard's 'genuine nature' his merit is duly noted by the court. With this fictionalised predecessor the writer, in any case, seems to express his personal feelings as an autodidact, and satirise those who sought only Ossianic-style, sanitised bards. Hogg seems to have been both attracted by, and repelled by, the Ossianic bardic model, exemplified, perhaps, by the visionary Highland shepherd bard of 'Kilmeny', a sombre and Ossianic figure, Drummond of Ern; he is reminiscent, too, of 'Rhymer' Thomas of Ercildoune.

The final judgement of *The Queen's Wake* allows Hogg to make implicit statements about Highland and Lowland bards, literary ranking and his own position as an autodidact. The first night is won by Gardyn, the second by the Bard of Ettrick, and the third by the 'nameless stranger' of the Borders, who withdraws from the contest for the overall winner (thereby satisfying Lowland honour). The two remaining contestants perform: Gardyn sings a tale of love in Carron, the bard of Ettrick relates 'Tam Lin'. Gardyn, ultimately, takes Mary's jewelled harp, wryly reflecting current assumptions. Stressing Hogg's local affiliations, a consolation prize is awarded to the Ettrick bard. While Highland song is presented as marginally more palatable than the earthier (and unearthlier) Lowland tradition, the close contest denies Lowland inferiority.

The Ettrick bard is awarded an ancient harp made by a wizard. Here, Ossian is given a specifically Lowlands twist, and modernised. Ossian's Highland 'harp' now celebrates Borders 'elves' and the 'fitting shapes' of Borders supernatural creatures, as fitting to Hogg as king of the 'mountain and fairy school'. This harp is passed bard to bard: to Bangour though not to Ramsay ('His was some lyre from lady's hall,/ And not the mountain harp at all') nor to Langhorn ('His was the modish lyre of art'), to Logan and Leyden; gloriously to Walter the Abbot (Scott) who, by retuning, coaxes ancient melodies from it. Scott, says Hogg, showed him the lyre only to insult him:

O could the bard I loved so long,
 Reprove my fond aspiring song!

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Or could his tongue of candour say,
 That I should throw my harp away!
 Just when her notes began with skill,
 To sound beneath the southern hill,[...]
 'Twas kindness all, I cannot blame,
 For bootless is the minstrel flame;
 But sure a bard might well have known
 Another's feelings by his own! (p.337)

Hogg pokes fun at himself here. Walter the Abbot, he continues, took the Caledonian harp to other kingdoms: 'That harp he never more shall see,/ Unless 'mong Scotland's hills with me'. As *The Queen's Wake* opened by evoking an Ossianic-style 'Mountain Lyre', so the cycle is completed with a farewell to the harp. In the spring, Hogg will seek the inspirational harp, which, as reads his epitaph by St Mary's Loch, 'taught the wandering winds to sing' (the writer's seal, of course, was also a harp).

Hogg often uses Ossianic images ironically. In *The Royal Jubilee. A Scottish Mask* (1822), for instance, the *dramatis personae* include a Genius of the Gael 'with Highland spirits', calling for unity within Scotland; he is a blind 'ghost of Ossian' who seeks reconciliation with the Border Queen. Unlike Macpherson's proto-autodidact, Hogg's modern ghost accepts the present and looks forward to the future:

That day is past, as well it should:
 And one is come, I knew it would!
 On which our names shall higher soar
 Than e'er rose nations' fame before.
 Our king is come, and claims our race,
 In garb and lineament of face.

However, deep-seated rifts are suggested between the Highlands and the Lowlands. The Queen wants to be in the first place to meet the King, but the genius of the Gael, Donald More, threatens her with 'terrible Dundee'. The situation is only resolved by the intervention of Archy Campbell, the Highland policeman, who uses parodic modern Highland speech rather than Ossianic bluster, 'tere shall none of you be either first or last, for you shall just form a round robin about our mhaister and our King, and pe a creat, and a strong, and a mighty pulwark'.⁹ Hogg demonstrates a dualistic attitude to the Highlands here, as both the home of Ossian and the sometimes ludicrous 'Donald' of *Jacobite Relics*.

Throughout his work, then, Hogg uses a range of Ossianic types. In 'Superstition' in *The Pilgrims of the Sun* (1815), he lays claim to the Ossianic harp again to 'sing of visions that have been/ And cherish hope of visions yet to be' and celebrate 'mountains clothed in everlasting green'. Hugo of

Noroway, Mary's suitor in 'The Pilgrims of the Sun' is a 'Harper out of the East', a pastoral figure who unites aspects of the harpist Ossian with Borders poetic precedents, like Thomas the Rhymer, acting as a prototype Ettrick Shepherd. The cowardly 'Connell of Dee', ironically, shares the name of Ossianic heroes. In *Mador of the Moor* (1816) too 'as an expert in describing nature, and mountain-scenery in particular', Hogg is the self-declared 'nursling of the wild, the Mountain Bard', and 'Nature's simple bard'. In 'The Stuarts of Appin' the Highlands becomes analagous to Hogg's vision of the Borders, replete with peasant and legendary associations. Jacobitism is conflated with Ossianic losses, making history a series of linked events, in the style often associated with oral accounts rather than literary linear chronology. In prose, too, Hogg explores Ossianic types, for instance with the seer of 'A Tale of an Old Highlander' (1832).¹⁰ *Queen Hynde* (1825), most spectacularly, follows Ossianic models, using the Ossianic harp as aspirational material. This is an Ossianic-style tale of Norse invasion and Irish assistance to the beleaguered Scottish monarch, Hynde. As 'Nature's unstaidd, erratic child', Hogg rejects 'ungenial rules' and seeks the 'boundless wilderness to roam'. In particular:

O fain would I borrow the harp of that land,
Where the dark sullen eagle broods over the strand [...]
The harp of that region of storm and of calm.¹¹

Here, as elsewhere, he postures as 'Nature's unstaidd erratic child' but, as often, Hogg both accepts and rejects peasant poet stereotyping. He is somewhat tongue in cheek: *Queen Hynde* implies the modern autodidact is more sophisticated than the ancient harpist.

Hogg, at least partly, is posing in *Queen Hynde* as a modern version of Ossian. Macpherson's notion of an ethnically pure, unconquered Scotland of the past, as expressed in 'Temora', is highly influential. *Queen Hynde*, set in a golden age when the blood of Albyn's ruler was not adulterated by 'plodding Pict' or 'sullen Saxon', promotes the theme of the Scottish people united, like the Achanian tribes of the *Iliad*, in one cause (so too *Jacobite Relics* and *The Royal Jubilee* called for unity). The epic world of the *Iliad*, moreover, enhances the Ossianic associations: just as there are funeral games to honour Patroclus, so too the dead Coulan Brande is similarly honoured. The beleaguered Ireland of *Fingal* becomes Hynde's threatened Scotland, and Beregon, Hynde's residence, is Ossian's Selma. *Queen Hynde* in many ways reverses the plot of *Fingal*. There, Ireland is invaded by Swaran, King of Lochlyn (Denmark). Cuchulaid, the Irish military leader, is assisted in expelling the Danes by Fingal, the King of Scotland, and his fleet. The hero of *Queen Hynde*, moreover, mirrors that

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of Macpherson's early piece, 'The Highlander', based on Buchanan's *Re-rum Scotticarum Historiae* (1582) which features the Danish leaders Haco and Helveticus. In the idealised Ossianic society Hynde seeks to protect, warriors, ministers and bards have mutual responsibilities over 'counsel and field' (the Homeric *agora* and battlefield). There is, however, a touch of humour to this picture and Hogg is alert to potentially ludicrous aspects of his reconstructed Golden Age Scotland. The ambivalent attitudes towards Hynde's elderly Ossianic bard Ila Glas are revealing. At times Ila Glas is treated with downright discourtesy. En route to Iona, for instance, he is portrayed as 'old' and the singer of 'tiresome, stale lays'. Hogg, as a latter-day Ossian, was both praised and berated for his 'Mountain Bard' tale, *Queen Hynde*. The *Philomathic Journal* thought *Queen Hynde* 'wildly beautiful and original' and admired Hogg as an 'untutored child of song, whose only monitor is nature'. The *Westminster Review*, in contrast, observed, 'This Poem, as it is called on the title-page, seemed to have been inspired by insolence and whisky-punch [...] an experiment intended to ascertain how far the English public will allow itself to be insulted'.¹² The image of the 'Mountain Bard', then, had double-edged effects for Hogg. Although his Ossianic associations lent romantic overtones to the poet (he was perceived, in his Ossianic mode, as one who excelled in 'wild poetry' by John Wilson) the downside was that Hogg, as the inspired 'Wild Huntsman' of the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, was expected to know his place and keep to it. Real, modern Bards were treated with rather less respect than archaic, fictional ones. Just as Burns was seen as natural at the plough but ill-suited to the parlour, so the Shepherd is too coarse to fit in with the *Maga* set; his manners 'may do in Ettrick—or the Forest—where the breed of wild boars is not wholly extirpated' but not in polite society.¹³

Hogg, in his posturing as an Ossianic 'Mountain Bard', offered readers the vicarious pleasure of experiencing true rustic genius and offered the poet the possibility of limited financial gain. But just as Hogg was not to be taken seriously as a writer of innovative novels—witness the poor contemporary reception of his masterpiece, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824)—so was his more experimental poetry neglected. For instance, one of his finest works, the satirical 'Russiade' (1822) passed virtually unnoticed by contemporaries. Nor did the image of the Ettrick Shepherd, a Southern version of Ossian, help Hogg win attention as a writer of prose, as he was well aware. In 1813, Hogg wrote to Constable in connection with his proposed collection of 'traditionary tales', 'as I think the Ettrick Shepherd is rather become a hackneyed name [...] having gained a character as a bard is perhaps no commenda-

tion to a writer of prose tales [and] I am determined to publish them under a fictitious name'—J. H. Craig of Douglas.¹⁴ The proposal was dropped; 'Ettrick Shepherd' was too commercially viable for 'traditionary' matters to be rejected.

Hogg, then, used elements of Ossianic material in his poetry in three main ways: as a source of literary motifs, in creating and investigating notions of Scottish bards, and as a model for representing himself as a Southern Mountain Bard. Furthermore, critical responses to the Ettrick Shepherd were partly shaped by reactions to Macpherson's Ossian. Incidentally, the image of the harpist Ossian, the mountain bard, has proved a widely-enduring motif in Highland as well as Lowland tradition. It would be intriguing to compare the influence of Macpherson's Ossianic imagery on Lowland and Highland poetry in the nineteenth century and beyond. The great Skye poet Niall MacLeod (1843-1924), for instance, entitled his collection *Clarsack an Doire* (1883) [*Harp of the Grove*], including 'Sealladh air Oisean' ['Searching for Ossian']. Macpherson's Ossian, like Ramsay's 'Gentle Shepherd' and Burns as 'heaven-taught ploughman', offered an important aspirational image in the nineteenth century for Bards who were not formally educated. I would like to end, though, by quoting Hogg's tribute to 'The Harp of Ossian' where, in effect, he puts the Ossianic harp to rest:

'My country, farewell! for the murmurs of sorrow
Alone the dark mountains of Scotia become;
Her sons condescend from new models to borrow,
And voices of strangers prevail in the hum.
Before the smooth face of our Saxon invaders,
Is quench'd the last ray in the eye of the free;
Then, oh! let me rest in the caves of thy fathers,
Forgetful of them as forgetful of thee!'¹⁵

NOTES

- 1 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Oxford, 1990), p.160.
- 2 See Gordon Willis, 'Hogg's Personal Library: Holdings in Stirling University', *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 3 (1992), 87-88. *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Galic or Erse language* (Edinburgh, 1760), VIII. *Fingal, an ancient epic poem, in six books: together with several other poems. Composed by Ossian the son of Fingal, translated from the Galic language by James Macpherson* (London, 1761/62), III. *Temora, An Ancient Epic Poem, in eight books, and other epic poems [...] Translated from the Galic language by James Macpherson, with a Critical dissertation on the poems of Ossian by Hugh Blair* (London, 1763). These are reprinted in *The Poems of Ossian and*

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9 James Hog
1822), pp.23

Related Works, edited by Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh, 1996): page references in this article are to this edition. Scott, in *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-03) seems to have been attempting to create a Southern version of Macpherson's Northern canon, although based on ballad traditions, celebrating the 'natural pathos' and 'rude energy' of 'the rude minstrel' of the South: see Walter Scott, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, edited by T. F. Henderson, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1902), I, 160-61. See James Hogg, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1829).

- 3 See Hugh Blair, *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, The Son of Fingal* (London, 1763), especially pp.1-2, 14-17, 53-54, and 68.
- 4 See *The Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, appointed to Inquire into the Nature and Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian*, edited by Henry Mackenzie (Edinburgh, 1805). James Hogg, *The Jacobite Relics of Scotland*, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London, 1819-1821), passim. James Hogg, *Scottish Pastorals, Poems, Songs, &c. mostly written in the Dialect of the South*, edited by Elaine Petrie (Stirling, 1988). James Hogg, *The Mountain Bard* (Edinburgh and London, 1807), which was reprinted and enlarged in a new Edinburgh edition in 1821. James Hogg, *The Forest Minstrel; a Selection of Songs, Adapted to the most favourite Scottish Airs* (Edinburgh and London, 1810). 'Sir David Graeme', *Scots Magazine*, 67 (September 1805), 701-03 was reprinted in *The Mountain Bard* (1807), pp.3-14. James Hogg, 'Farewell to Ettrick', *The Mountain Bard* (1807), pp.164-69 first appeared as 'Jamie's Farewell to Ettrick', *Scots Magazine*, 66 (1804), 190-91. See Robert Burns, 'Song' celebrating 'the Bonnie Banks of Ayr' in *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, edited by J. Kinsley, 3 vols (Oxford, 1968), I, Song 122.
- 5 See the reviews of *The Mountain Bard* in the *Scots Magazine*, 69 (April 1807), 286, and in the *Monthly Review*, new series, 95 (1821), 429. The language of Ossian was often applied to poets of relatively lowly social origin, even by poets from similar backgrounds. William Tennant portrayed Allan Ramsay (perhaps ironically) as an Ossianic ingenu, raised 'surrounded by wild and mountainous scenery, and amid an artless and secluded people, whose manners and language were of pastoral simplicity' in *The Poems of Allan Ramsay. To Which is Prefixed the Life of the Author by William Tennant* (Edinburgh and London, 1819), pp.iv-v. Hogg observed, regarding Allan Cunningham's poetry, 'I was astonished at the luxuriousness of his fancy. It was boundless; but it was the luxury of a rich garden overrun with rampant weeds [...]. I remember seeing some imitations of Ossian by him, which I thought exceedingly good; and it struck me that that style of composition was peculiarly fitted for his vast and fervent imagination', 'Reminiscences of Former Days', *Altrive Tales* (London, 1832), p.cxxxiv.
- 6 'The Soldier's Widow', *The Forest Minstrel*, pp.3-4. 'The Moon was a-waining', *The Forest Minstrel*, pp.9-10. 'Memoir of the Life of James Hogg', *The Mountain Bard* (1821), p.xxxx.
- 7 See the review of *The Forest Minstrel* in *Scots Magazine*, 72 (April 1810), 604-08.
- 8 James Hogg, 'Malcolm of Lorn', in *The Queen's Wake: A Legendary Poem*, sixth edition (Edinburgh and London, 1819), pp.35-35. All other references to poems from *The Queen's Wake* are to this edition, given within the text in parentheses.
- 9 James Hogg, *The Royal Jubilee. A Scottish Mask* (Edinburgh and London, 1822), pp.23, 29.

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- 10 James Hogg, 'Superstition', in *The Pilgrims of the Sun; a Poem* (London and Edinburgh, 1815), pp.129-48; *Mador of the Moor; A Poem* (Edinburgh and London, 1816), pp.7, 9; 'The Stuarts of Appin', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 24 (October 1828), 535-36; 'A Tale of an Old Highlander', *Metropolitan*, 3 (February 1832), 113-20.
- 11 James Hogg, *Queen Hynde* (Edinburgh, 1825), Parts First and Fourth.
- 12 See the reviews of *Queen Hynde* in the *Philomathic Journal*, 3 (April 1825), 161-205 and in the *Westminster Review*, 3 (April 1825), 531.
- 13 The 'Noctes Ambrosianae' series appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* between 1822 and 1835: see John Wilson, *Noctes Ambrosianae*, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1863), I, 242.
- 14 See Hogg's letter to Constable of 20 May 1813, in NLS MS 7200, f.203. (I am grateful to the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland for permission to refer to the Constable Letter Books in their care.) However, as an instigation to patronage, Hogg sometimes extended the notions of himself as an Ossianic bard into suggesting the obligations of his supposed social superiors. For instance, the dedicatory 'Verses Addressed to the Right Honourable Lady Anne Scott of Buccleuch' show the humble 'minstrel' Hogg claiming that he loved to hear Anne's own 'woodland harp'; her music recalled 'The patriarchal days of yore,/ The mountain music heard no more' and (resonant) bonds 'With chief, with father, and with friend'—see *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London, 1818), I, i-ix. Niall MacLeòid, 'Sealladh air Oisean', *Clarsach an Doire* (Glasgow, 1975), pp.165-68.
- 15 James Hogg, 'The Harp of Ossian', *Songs* (Edinburgh and London, 1831), pp.75-76.

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